

I like hiking. Although I am not very good at it, I like to hike hills so that I can see a panoramic view from the hill top. I am very careful when I hike. I don't hike after rainy days because the soil often very slippery. I avoid hiking too close to a steep slope in case I fall. In another word, avoid "slippery slope". I remember I learned this idiom shortly after I arrived US when someone said I am on a slippery slope. Slippery Slope – a situation in which some behavior or action will eventually lead to a worse form of the same behavior or action, or disastrous outcome.

1. You are on a slippery slope when you focus on people

Verses 1 to 16 is about how the author saw the wicked people prospered:

- a. Wicked people have more material abundance and good health than you. (Verses 3 to 5)
- b. Wicked people can get away with terrible offenses and sins
- c. I try to remain holy and have a pure heart, but seeing the prosperity of the wicked people makes me discouraged, confused and sad. (Verses 16 and 21)

Focused on people's worldly actions and prosperity can make you fall easily. In verse 2, it states "almost slipped". You are like on a slippery slope, and if you don't turn back to God you will slip and fall.

2. God helps you to see the truth – the wicked people already fall on a slippery slope

Verses 17 to 22 describe how we can see the truth of the situation. We realize the consequence of the wicked people by turning to God (verse 17). Then verses 18 and 19 state "Surely you place them on slippery ground; you cast them down to ruin. How suddenly are they destroyed, completely swept away by terrors.". They are destroyed so fast like someone slipped on a very steep slippery slope. Their actions turn into disastrous outcome.

3. God is our need and our desire

Verses 23 to 24 describe God's blessing and caring. God is with me always; God holds me by my right hand (verse 23). I remember when I was small where my parents held my hand while walking on the street. It was such a secure and pleasant feeling. That is the same as God holding you and me. In addition, verse 24 states "you guide me with your counsel". He teaches us and guides us. Finally, the second half of verse 24 is the final blessing. He will take me into glory. God will welcome us in Heaven.

The author expressed to God in verse 25 (Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you.) Verses 23 and 24 describe what God does, and verse 25 is about an individual's response. Do you, like the psalmist, confess that God is my need and my only desire?

4. God is behind us. He is our strength and refuge.

Verses 26 to 28 conclude this psalm. We might be crushed in this society but the sovereign Lord is our refuge. God gives you the spiritual and emotional strength.

I remember when my son was small where he started to learn to walk. He loved to walk by himself to different places like different rooms in the house. One time, he walked by himself from one room to another. I usually just sit there and watched him in distance but that time I followed him right behind his back. He started to panic and cry when he didn't see me. I made a noise behind him and he turned around. His face changed from fear to relief and ran to hold me. This illustrates you and I sometimes can have similar situation that is not concise of God is behind you and in control of all the things happening around you. The psalmist described it perfectly in verse 25.

In my son's situation, a stranger can be behind him at the same time I am behind him in the street. However, he has no fear because he knows Daddy is strong and always watch over and protect him. A child's only desire and need is the parents are behind him and protect him. Similarly, Satan can distract us behind the scene as described on earlier verses in this Psalm. However, our desire and need are the Heavenly Father.

In summary, avoid slippery slope by focus on God, not people. God is our desire and strength even we might face many difficulties on earth.

(Note, I know of a very popular Chinese Christian song used verse 25 as the title and theme 除你以外. Listen to or sing this song can remind us what is our desire shall be - God.)